Susanoo: One of the Central Gods in Japanese Mythology

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Summary

The god Susanoo is one of the central characters in the eighth-century annals known as *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, and the contradictory way he is depicted has inspired several different interpretations. On one hand he is the violent counter-part of the sun-goddess Amaterasu, on the other, the hero who slays the enormous serpent Yamata no Orochi and saves the maiden of the rice-fields. Susanoo is one of the most important deities in the land descriptions (*Fudoki*) from the same period as well, where the stories about him lack any negative features. Among the variety of other hypotheses about the reasons for such a characterization, I suggest my point of view based on a comprehensive study of the three mentioned sources and other ancient documents. I doubt that the roles Susanoo plays in the myths recorded in these documents come simply out of the political motives that lay at the base of their compilation To me, it seems that both positive and negative features lay at the base of this god's character from the very beginning, as he was the god who was supposed to bring sufficient rain for the crops I think he was derived from the priests performing rites for rain and serving at shrines where sacred rice and water were regularly offered to the gods. At the same time, the worship of a pair consisting of a sun-deity and a water-deity, which is often met at Japanese shrines even today, must have been quite important in ancient Japan. Such a connection must have lain at the base of the relation between Susanoo and Amaterasu.

Key words

CONTRADICTORY CHARACTER, *BANSHIN* (FOREIGN GOD), BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEATURES, NE-NO-KUNI (LAND OF THE ROOTS), OROCHI (*GIANT SERPENT*), INADA-HIME ("MAIDEN OF THE RICE-FIELD"), KUMANO TAISHA, *SUSA-TA* ("SUSA" RICE FIELDS), PRAYER FOR RAIN, RAINWATER AND SUNSHINE

PREFACE

It has been widely acknowledged that the most important character in Japanese mythology is the "goddess shining all-over Heaven," who is considered to be the ancestor of the Imperial line — Amaterasu. On the other hand, in the five remaining *Fudoki* (those of the provinces of Hitachi, Harima, Izumo, Hizen, and Bungo) which depict the geographical situation of ancient (eighth-century) Japan and contain quite a lot of legends connected with the different places, the highest place among the gods belongs to Ōnamuchi, "the Great god who built the world under Heaven" (an expression often used in *Izumo Fudoki*). These two gods, Amaterasu and Ōnamuchi, are related with the basic beliefs in ancient Japan. Yet there is another god staying between these two and deeply connected with both of them, without whom it is impossible to come to a full understanding of the Japanese mythology.[1] This god combines into his character both positive and negative features and moves around the very center of the mythical narrative. According to the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* this god is the younger brother of Amaterasu and the ancestor of Ōnamuchi.

This god is Susanoo. Japanese mythology, on account of the intentional reorganization in the eighth century, is quite complicated as a whole, yet as this god is concerned, the narrative is still more complicated and difficult to understand. One of the possible explanations might be that the character of this god had undergone great changes either till the time the myths were recorded in the above-mentioned documents, or in the very process of this recording. To be more exact, with the establishment of the Central Government in the region of Yamato, the centre of the Pantheon was changed, and accordingly, the centre of the mythical narrative was moved too, which I think influenced most of all the character of the god called Susanoo.

So studying the different ways Susanoo is revealed, I will try to trace the possible origin and development of the Japanese myths about him and to find the threads which might connect them with the older Japanese beliefs. The image of Susanoo which we get from the above mentioned three sources is so complex that some of the features of his character seem to be in contradiction with each other. This is the reason for the great number of interpretations of his role and characteristics. Here are the main theories in his interpretation offered by the Japanese scholars.

The interpretation of any Japanese god should start with the opinion of the pioneer of Japanese mythology, Motoori Norinaga. In his *Kojiki-den* (Explanation of *Kojiki*) he says that as Izanagi's nose had deeply inhaled the

contaminated air of the World of the Dead, it was impossible to purify it completely during the ritual of purification. This was the reason why Susanoo no Mikoto became a bad god. Thus he sees only negative features in the character of this god.[2]

Unlike Norinaga, who took the myths written in *Kojiki* as pure historical facts, the famous Tsuda Sōkichi doubted every word there as an intentional creation devised for political reasons. Yet he too interpreted Susanoo as a negative god. According to Tsuda, Susanoo was a personage created as the destroyer and revolter, the opposite of the Imperial ancestress Amaterasu, being thought up so as to match her also on the level of greatness.

Speaking for our time, Ōbayashi Taryō,[3] studying myths from the standpoint of comparative mythology, also takes Susanoo for the bad hero. He explains that the myth about Amaterasu, Susanoo, and Tsukuyomi is a derivative of a continental (South east Asian) myth in which the Sun, the Moon, and the Dark Star are brothers and sisters and the Dark Star plays the bad role.

Another interpretation of Susanoo as a negative personage is the most widely spread opinion that he is the god of storms and typhoons.

At the same time, many other scholars insist that there were no negative features in the original myth about this god. Some of these scholars, for example, Matsumura Takeo,[4] state that the original looks of Susanoo are as he is described in the *Izumo Fudoki*: a peaceful, simple god connected with the rice fields. The professor thinks that his character had been deliberately changed, when Susanoo was made one of the personages taking part in the royal myth by the compilers of *Kojiki*. That is how, according to Matsumura Takeo, Susanoo came to play the great, yet negative role on the stage of Takama-ga-Hara (The Plain of High Heaven). Another scholar, Matsumoto Nobuhiro,[5] sees Susanoo as the god of rich harvest. This is by the reasoning that when Susanoo cries, calamities occur, which, according to Matsumoto Nobuhiro, happens when the god of the harvest cries (remember the Greek Demeter mourning for her daughter). But I think that "mourning" and "crying" are not quite one and the same.

The above two interpretations of Susanoo as a positive god are based on his deep connection with the rice field. Yet Matsumae Takeshi prefers a different line. He also interprets Susanoo as a positive god, but connects him with the sea. According to Matsumae, Susanoo was originally worshiped as the *mamori-gami* (patron god) of sailors. Also, unlike the above-mentioned scholars, who insist that the origin of his worship is in Izumo, Prof. Matsumae relates his beginning with Kii no kuni[6] (there are villages called Susa in both provinces), whence his worship was spread. And since the place and the beliefs connected with it were very old, the rank given to Susanoo's shrine in Kii, Kumano Shrine, was quite high. This, according to the professor, is the reason

why Susanoo was taken as one of the main personages of the royal myth. Prof. Matsumae explains that the name of Susanoo's original place of worship, Kii no kuni, comes from the word ki meaning "tree." This probably came to mean that it was rich in timber, which was necessary for the construction of boats. So the people who lived there, some of the sea-side tribes called *ama*, were able to make different boats, both for far-sea sailing and for fishing. Thus, sailing to different regions of the Japanese islands, they must have spread widely the worship of their patron god, Susanoo.[7]

Another interpreter of the annals, Mizubayashi Takeshi, insists that Susanoo in the *Kojiki* and that in the *Nihon shoki* are not one and the same character. The name of this god in these two documents, though homonymous, is written with different characters, 須佐之男命 in the first, and 素戔烏尊 in the second. And while Susanoo in the *Kojiki* is depicted as the god of water, in the *Nihon shoki* he is a violent, negative god who wants to steal from Amaterasu the power over the world of gods, Takama-ga-Hara, or so argues Prof. Mizubayashi.[8]

And finally the opinion that Susanoo is a foreign god (*banshin*) should be mentioned. One of its current supporters, Mishina Shōei, explains that this god has entered Japan from Korea, and was at first worshiped only by the Koreans who lived on the Japanese islands.[9] Matsumae Takeshi also agrees that this theory, existent since quite early times, has some strong bases. First, in one of the variations given in the *Nihon shoki*, after he was expelled from Takama-ga-Hara, Susanoo, followed by his son Isotakeru, went down to a place called *Soshimori* in *Shiragi* and lived there for a while. Then one day he made a boat of clay and came to Japan, landing in Izumo-no-kuni, at the valley of the river Hii. It is quite possible that the places Soshimori as well as the akso mentioned *Kara-kuni* (= Korea) and *Kumaso-taki* are to be found in Korea. Indeed, "Shiragi" is obviously the name of one of the Korean early kingdoms, Silla. Second, in the book called *Nihon shoki koketsu*, a commentary of the section about the gods in the *Nihon shoki*, there is the expression 素戔烏尊始開新羅国 ("Susanoo first opened the country of Shiragi"). As a matter of fact, there was in ancient Silla a monarch whose name sounds similar to that of Susanoo. He is mentioned in the Korean historical document *Samguk Sagi* (三国史記) in the chapter about Silla, and is pronounced *susung*, written with the characters 次次雄 or 慈充, which, according to the commentary of the Korean scholar Kum Temun,[10] means "shaman" (巫). According to Matsumse Takeshi, this is the same personage who appears in the ritual of modern-times Korea, showing the descent of a god, and in which the male shaman is called *susung*. This indicates that the name of Susanoo comes from the Korean word for a male priest — su-sung — and shows that this god was originally a male shaman, with origins traced from the continent. And third,

there is a legend in the *Bungo Fudoki* about the god Mutō, worshiped in the shrine of E-no-kuma and living in the "north sea," in which the god identifies himself with Susanoo. So there Susanoo appears as a god with a northern origin. Thus, according to the above-mentioned three main reasons, Susanoo is considered to be a *banshin*, a foreign god.

These are the basic theories about the character of Susanoo. One can see from their number and variety how complex the character of this god is, as each of them is based on a certain description in the ancient annals and on certain features of his character. The contradictory theories are said to come from the contradictory nature of his depictions, yet all of the above-mentioned scholars insist that originally the character of Susanoo should not have been contradictory but must have become so as the god was made a part of the royal myth.

Yet I think that contradiction was inherent in Susanoo's character since the very beginning. And although this god certainly underwent drastic changes in the process of forming of the royal myth, as it appears in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, even before he was made a part of it Susanoo must have combined in his character both positive and negative features. Even though they acknowledge the complex character of Susanoo, the above-mentioned theories point as original either the positive or the negative side of his character alone, saying the other one is a product of later changes. Each of these theories certainly has its foundations, yet both the positive and the negative sides of Susanoo have their meaning and are originally a part of his character. So looking through the main point of the above-mentioned theories, I would like to find what they had missed in analyzing the character of Susanoo.

First of all comes the problem if Susanoo is a negative god. There were three main arguments for this statement. (1) the desecrations of Amaterasu's rice fields in Takama-ga-Hara, which in the *Ō-harae norito* are called "heavenly sins" (*ama-tsu-tsumi*); (2) the lack of clarity in the main text (the *hon-bun*) of the *Nihon shoki* concerning whether or not Susanoo kept the sacred oath (*ukehi*) with Amaterasu or has not. From there one gets the impression that Susanoo bore the wrong children, which means that he could not prove to his sister he had no hostile intentions, or otherwise that he actually came up to conquer and reign over Takama-ga-Hara, (3) originally Susanoo was not a negative god, but when, because of some political reasons, he was made a part of the royal myth, he was depicted as a negative hero.

Now, let us look at the negativeness of Susanoo in statement 1. As Mizubayashi shows, in the *Kojiki* his mischief arises out of joy with the victory (*kachi-sabi*) in the oath (*ukehi*) and express the strength, swiftness, and vigor of this god. As for 2, the professor explains that there is a contradiction in the way the god is depicted in the *Nihon shoki*, as his actions of giving hairs

from his body, which were to be planted and become trees useful to the people, as well as the victory over the enormous serpent, surely do not reveal a negative, but quite a beneficent god. Yet, if we consider the statements that Susanoo is a positive, peaceful god without any bad features, we shall see that they do not explain why his actions are so bad that they are treated as sins (heavenly sins). And even if these actions are simply out of joy, is it possible not to take them in a bad sense, is it natural not to blame him for becoming the reason of so many calamities? Prof. Mizubayashi, who rightly saw both positive and negative features in the original character of Susanoo, in his effort to show that the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* are independent, absolutely different works, decided to create two Susanoos and actually failed to reveal the overall character of this god.

On the other hand, there is one problem with 3. According to Matsumae, the worship of Susanoo was quite wide spread in the old times, which was the reason this god was made one of the main personages of the royal myth, where he was given a bad role. The question is, why should this so greatly worshiped, peaceful and ancient god, be made to play such a negative role? Why should a peaceful, sea-faring patron deity, as Prof. Matsumae interprets him, enter the royal myth as the great opponent of Amaterasu, and why, if he had no link with this goddess whatsoever, should he be made her brother? I would like to further review the myths connected with Susanoo and try to find his right place in the Japanese mythology.

I. SUSANOO AS DEPICTED IN JAPANESE MYTHS

1. On the creation of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*

In order to understand the character of Susanoo, one should first look at how this god is portrayed in the Japanese annals *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Both written in the beginning of the eighth century, these two books have quite different purposes. Yet in spite of their different character, aim, and authors, they both actually deal with the same myths and the same historical events. In other words, one and the same object is viewed from different angles, each with accordance with the purposes of the corresponding book. So, the same god Susanoo is depicted in two different ways in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, but this does not mean two (or if we include also the Susanoo in the *Fudoki*, three) gods bearing the same name were worshiped in ancient Japan. The problem here is: why was this god revealed in several different ways?

As research has concluded, the *Nihon shoki* was written in the year of 720 by a staff of compilers with Prince Toneri at the head. It was based on the pattern of the Chinese historical records, as the first of the so-called *Six national*

histories (*Rikkoku-shi*) compiled by the beginning of the tenth century. Thus, the *Nihon shoki* was created as a historical book, representing the state before the outside world; so in order to prove its legitimacy, the information is given in big details. In the part called "Era of the Gods" this is expressed in the inclusion of several versions of every myth. The whole book is written in Chinese and the expressions are often in the style of the current Chinese (of the Han period), which is also very important for the correct interpretation of the myths it contains.

The *Kojiki* was written earlier than the *Nihon shoki*, in 712, and there exist a lot of questions around the compilation of its myths. According to its preface, its sources were the royal records and the annals, belonging respectively to the royal family and to the different Clans (*uji*).They were first learned by heart by a youth (or a young lady) called Hieda no Are, and then written selectively by Ōno no Yasumaro. But how far this can be trusted is still under a big question. The *Kojiki* is the first attempt to link together the genealogy of the Japanese kings with that of the gods, that is, the historical past with the religious beliefs of the different provinces. Its consecutive structure also suggests quite a complex process of rethinking and reorganization of the materials. This is why there are many researchers who consider the *Kojiki* a highly political work that served the aims of the Yamato sovereigns. On the other hand, it is not written in Chinese; rather, Chinese characters are often used as sound-syllables, the word order is Japanese, and there are no citations from Chinese historical documents — which causes some scholars to announce that it is more "Japanese" than the *Nihon shoki*.

Yet, though the *Kojiki* is obviously a historical work, by what reason was it necessary to compile another one similar to it eight years later? One of the explanations might be that even though it was compiled as a historical annal, the language of the *Kojiki* could not be understood in China, so it did not actually fulfill its task and the edition of a historical work written in Chinese was ordered. Or was it, perhaps, a private book of the royal family, the aim of which was to prove the righteousness of its rule?

Although their styles and aims seem different, both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* are the first attempt to organize into a pantheon the gods worshiped in ancient Japan, putting the ancestral god of the royal family — the goddess Amaterasu — in its center, and to link the narration of these gods with the narration of the Japanese kings. That is why, in order to understand the original images of the gods (i.e., before the age in which these annals were compiled) and their development, I think it is necessary to study comparatively the myths written in both of these annals together with those recorded in the *Fudoki*. Thus the process of the alteration of the gods' characters and their mutual relations might become a little clearer.

2. Susanoo as depicted in the *Kojiki*

Susanoo is depicted in the *Kojiki* as a growing man with abundant energy. His "growing" might be traced in four stages: (1) as a small boy who is crying all the time, bringing disasters with his crying; (2) as a youth who cannot control his abundant energy, but brings confusion to Takama-ga-Hara with his rude behavior and frightens his sister Amaterasu; (3) at the stage of proving his maturity, by the killing a giant serpent, saving a maiden, marrying that maiden, and building his own palace; (4) as a master of Ne-no-kuni (the Land of the Roots) and a father who subjects Ōnamuchi to difficult trials, before letting him become Ōkuninushi (Master of the Big Land).

Let us now analyze the character of Susanoo at each of these stages.

(1) Susanoo as a small boy

Where this stage is taking place is not pointed in the *Kojiki*, the background being only noted as *kono kuni* (this *kuni* = land). In the previous story, about the purification ritual of the god Izanagi, the event was said to have taken place "at a small river-mouth near Tachibana in Himuka in [the island of] Tsukushi."[11] As the appearance of Izanagi's divine children (Amaterasu, Tsukuyomi, and Susanoo) took part during the last stage of that purification, we could draw the conclusion that the boyhood of Susanoo must also be supposed to have passed there. This might be the same place, called *Himuka* in the myth about the surrendering of the *kuni*, a part of the Land of the Eight Big Islands (Ō-yashima-kuni) born of Izanagi and Izanami, or it might be a part of the Land in the Reed Plain (*Ashihara no Nakatsu-kuni*). Yet, as the term Ashihara no Nakatsu-kuni is not used at all at this stage of the narration, I am more inclined to think that the word *kono kuni* here means the Ō-yashima-kuni as a whole, not a certain part of it, such as Himuka or Ashihara Nakatsu-kuni. It must be pointed out that though presenting the background of the narration, it is not determined yet who should rule this Ō-yashima-kuni, while Izanagi divided the rulership of Takama-ga-Hara, Yo-no-Osu kuni (the Dominion of the "Night")[12] and Una Bara (the Sea-Plain)[13] among the above mentioned three divine children. Of them, in the *Kojiki*, Susanoo is given the rulership over the Sea-Plain, but instead of fulfilling his duty there, he cries unceasingly. His crying brings great disasters to the world. Finally, hearing that the reason for his crying is Susanoo's wish to go to his "deceased mother's land, to the Nether distant land"[14] (*Ne-no-katasu kuni* = the Land of the Steady Roots),[15] Izanagi sends him away from *kono kuni*.

If we put aside the flowing of mythical time (i.e., the fact that Izanagi treats his new-born children as grown up rulers) and the metaphor that Susanoo cries himself out till his beard becomes eight cubits long and reaches his stom-

ach (meaning he cried for a very, very long time), we can see that here Susanoo is depicted as a child, as a spoiled one besides, who does not like to be away from his mother. In the *Kojiki* the three divine children come to exist[16] from parts of Izanagi's body during the ritual of purification, and thus do not happen to have any mother, especially considering the fact that at that time Izanami is already deceased. Thus Susanoo's wish to go where his mother is seems strange at first sight. Yet one should pay attention here that Susanoo does not want to go simply to the land where his mother is, but to his "deceased mother's land," that is, the land, not his mother, is his destination, and also to the connection between the land he is given to rule (the Sea-Plain) and the disasters he brings with his crying (the green mountains withered and the rivers were dried up). We can see from the second that Susanoo has a certain connection with the sea and the water as a whole. Yet, although we might be inclined to think it more natural for the crying of a god to bring an abundance of water and floods to the world, in this case what it brings is draught.

Now, what this long crying and the disasters unwillingly caused by it, and the strong wish to go to Ne-no-kuni mean as a whole, and what the concept of Ne-no-kuni was, will be treated in the section III.

(2) Susanoo as a youth

Sent away from *kono kuni* by his father Izanagi, Susanoo, obviously before his departure for the land of his destination (Ne-no-kuni), climbs up to Takama-ga-Hara wishing to meet his sister, Amaterasu. His ascending is such that mountains and rivers shake and the earth quakes. This makes Amaterasu think her brother is coming with the violent intention to conquer Takama-ga-Hara. In order to prove he has no such evil intentions, Susanoo has to perform a ritual oath (*ukehi*)[17] together with Amaterasu. In this ritual he proves that he, not his sister, is right, that is, that he has not come with the intention to take over her domain. Yet, mad with joy at his victory over his sister's suspicion, and not able to control himself and behave properly, Susanoo does a lot of bad things. Frightened and angry with her brother's unreasonable behavior, she closes herself into the Heavenly Cave (*Ame no Iwaya*).

Here Susanoo behaves as a rough, unsophisticated young man. In the *Kojiki* there is one other similar personage, O-usu no Mikoto[18] (later given the name Yamato Takeru), from the records of Emperor Keikō. His father, the king, sent him to teach manners to his older brother who did not appear for the evening meal. O-usu no Mikoto did that by the horrible act of pulling off his brother's hands and legs, putting them in a bag and throwing them away. Frightened by the "valor and ferocity"[19] (the *takeku-araki kokoro*)[20] of his younger son, the king sent him away to subdue rioting tribes throughout the state. The same words — *takeku-araki kokoro* — are used as a characteristic of Susanoo in the

Nihon shoki, and his name also often begins with it — *Takehaya* Susanoo. Motoori Norinaga's interpretation of Susanoo's name (as coming from the expression "forward-going and violent," *susumi-aburu*) is also connected with the part after the oath. The deeds of Susanoo, the same as the deed of O-usu no Mikoto, are quite typical of some young men who have bad control over their energy and the potential capacity to become heroes under certain circumstances. It depends on the direction into which their energy is oriented that such young men become beneficent or dangerous to society. In the case of O-usu no Mikoto, his father sends him to lead conquering expeditions, so that this wanton youth becomes a famous national hero. Susanoo, too, expelled from Takama-ga-Hara by the Myriad Heavenly Gods, accomplishes a brave deed and behaves as a hero in the land of Izumo. We should also note here that Susanoo's purification, *harae*, symbolizes the turning point in his character.

(3) Susanoo as a young man of maturity

In the land of Izumo, as already mentioned, Susanoo is depicted as a hero. Yet between the stage of his potential to become such and his actual behaving as a hero, there is the myth about the slaying of the goddess Ō-getsu hime. As Matsumura Kazuo and other scholars have already shown, this myth was necessary exactly at the stage of Susanoo's transformation from a villain into a hero. The reason is that even though the act of slaying the goddess is to be negatively estimated, from her corpse the so-called five grains[21] appeared, which is actually a positive, beneficent result.

Let us now analyze the part where Susanoo slays the giant serpent and saves the maiden. His act could be interpreted as that of a cultural hero who kills the serpent, that poses a danger for the established order. Also, with this action Susanoo proves his maturity, marries the girl he has saved, Kushinada-hime, and builds his abode. I shall later consider the name of this maiden, yet let me direct your attention to two special points here. The first is the place where this scene occurs - Izumo. Often on account of this, this myth is thought as being local to that region. Yet it is not included in the *Izumo Fudoki*. What should the reason for this be?

We should examine again more thoroughly the scene after Susanoo's expulsion. Sent away from both *kono kuni* (Ō-ya-shima kuni) and Takama-ga-Hara, where is he bound to go? In the *Kojiki* this is not mentioned directly, but considering the preceding and the following events, we can assert that Susanoo is on his way to the Land of the Roots, Ne-no-kuni. His way there obviously passes through the land of Izumo. Why does he have to pass through this place? Saigō Nobutsuna explains that Ne-no-kuni and Yomi-no-kuni, places connected with the dead, were thought to be situated next to

Izumo.[22] This gives quite a good answer to the above question. But here come the problems, since when did such an image of Izumo appear, and to what extent we can look upon Ne-no-kuni as coinciding with the ancient Japanese concept of the World of the Dead? It is clear from the further explanation of Prof. Saigō Nobutsuna that since the time the court was settled in Yamato, the land of Yamato came to be considered as central. Thus, the region of Ise appeared to lay to the east of this center (the land where the sun was born in the morning), while Izumo was to the west of it (the land where the sun set down into the sea or died). So gradually, Izumo came to be looked upon as neighboring the World of the Dead. Yet my opinion is that the myth about Susanoo is older than the Yamato court, and this theory seems to me insufficient for the explanation of the connection between Ne-no-kuni and Izumo.

(4) Susanoo as lord of the land and a father

In the myth about Ōkuninushi, Susanoo is depicted as the lord of Ne-no-kuni and a father. He is in the place he wished to go to from the very beginning and lives there together with his daughter in a big, palace-like house. In this myth Susanoo's role is to turn the youth Ōnamuchi into Ōkuninushi, Lord of the Great Land. The narrative here is quite similar to the European folk-stories about the king who tests three times the candidates' abilities, and only the one who manages in all of them wins the hand of his daughter and the right to inherit the kingdom. It is interesting also that in both cases, the one who finally wins did not seem suitable at the beginning and the king has been unwilling to marry his daughter (= give the right of inheritance of the kingdom) to him, so he subjects him to practically impossible tasks. In this respect it could be mentioned that at first Susanoo calls Ōnamuchi *Ashihara-shiko-o* (Dirty man of the Reed Plain).

Susanoo's sending of Ōnamuchi = Ōkuninushi to be a ruler of Ashihara no Nakatsu-kuni is very similar to the later episode where Amatersu sends a ruler to the same place. The position of Susanoo in this myth seems very close to the position of Amatersu, yet this will discussed in the section V.

We thus traced here the four stages into which Susanoo is revealed in the *Kojiki*. The conclusion is that this god is depicted there in the process of growing, and both positive and negative features are typical of his character. His negative features are the unceasing crying which causes draught in the world, and the rude behavior in the domains of his sister Amaterasu, which threatens the established order of Takama-ga-Hara. As for his good characteristics, the slaying of the giant serpent in Izumo and his marriage with Kushinada-hime can be pointed out. Between these two is the act of slaying Ō-getsu-hime which marks the birth of the cereals and can thus be taken both in the negative and in the positive senses. Finally, there is the episode which in- cludes

political meaning — the appointing of Ōnamuchi as a Lord of the Great Land — where we should note that Susanoo acts as the lord of Ne-no-kuni.

3. Susanoo as depicted in the *Nihon shoki*

In the *Nihon shoki* as well, Susanoo is depicted in his growing, but different versions of each story are given, which enables a deeper examination of his character. The myth of Susanoo here is constructed in four paragraphs. These are the paragraphs of: (1) Susanoo's crying; (2) the oath with Amaterasu; (3) Susanoo's sins; and (4) Susanoo's beneficent deeds in the world of men, on his way to Ne-no-kuni. Unlike in the *Kojiki*, here it is not Susanoo who slays the goddess from whose corpse the crops appear, and the story of Ōnamuchi's trial, as a result of which he becomes The Lord of the Great Land, is not narrated. In the story of the seven crops the name of the slain goddess is Ukemochi no kami and the one who slays her is the god of the Moon, Tsukuyomi. The myth about Ōkuninushi = Ōnamuchi is shorter here, consisting only of the paragraph of this god's building of the land (*kuni-tsukuri*). On the contrary, the myth about Susanoo's introducing of the different kinds of trees to the Japanese islands, which does not exist in the *Kojiki*, is included. Now, let us examine closer the specifics of the myth about Susanoo in the *Nihon shoki*.

(1) Susanoo's crying

In this paragraph it is said that Amaterasu, Tsukuyomi, Susanoo, and Hiruko are born, and their destination is determined according to each of their personal features. Two versions of this story are given. One is a part of the main text and says that the gods Izanagi and Izanami, having given birth to the Land of the Eight Big Islands, the mountains, rivers, grass, and trees, set to give birth to the masters of the world.[23] As such, the above mentioned gods are born. Their names here are slightly different from the names given in the *Kojiki* (Susanoo and Tsukuyomi are written with different characters and Amaterasu is called Ō-hiru-me), yet their meaning is the same. As a variation of this story, in Version I, Izanagi alone creates these gods from precious objects: from the white mirror he holds in his left hand — Ō-hiru-me = Amaterasu; from a similar mirror in his right hand — Tsukuyomi; from his necklace — Susanoo.

It is an important point here that the personal characteristics of these gods determine their destination. The sun-goddess and the moon-god both shine up brightly, so they are sent to rule the Heavenly domains. The child called Hiruko is considered a failure, so it is put into a small boat and set to flow with the wind. Finally, Susanoo who cries unceasingly, thus bringing different evils to the world, is considered a bad child with no proper manners and the

parents send hım away to Ne-no-kunı. It seems to me quıte meanıngful that ın thıs story Susanoo ıs consıdered a god wıth "bad character" because hıs cryıng causes calamıtıes. However, rather than beıng a negatıve god, he sımply cannot control hıs strength and energy, whıch are so great that even hıs cryıng causes such awful calamıtıes.

In the other versıons the narratıon is sımılar to that of the *Kojıkı* — the three gods appear durıng Izanagı's purıfıcatıon rıtual from hıs eyes and nose, and theır father sends them to the places they are bound to rule.

Yet ın Versıon VI ıt ıs mentıoned that Amaterasu was sent to Takama-ga-Hara, whıle Tsukuyomı was sent to the Blue Sea-Plaın, and Susanoo, to the "World under Heaven,"[24] and ın Versıon XI Tsukuyomı ıs saıd to be bound to rule the Heavenly World together wıth Amaterasu, when Susanoo was sent to rule the Blue Sea-Plaın. From these slıghtly dıfferent versıons comes the theory that orıgınally Tsukuyomı and Susanoo were one and the same god. Tsukuyomı — the god of the Moon — has undoubtedly quıte a deep relatıon wıth the sea, yet ıt ıs slıghtly dıfferent from Susanoo's. At the base of the relatıon between the sea and the moon ıs the tıde — a natural phenomenon. In the case of Susanoo ıt comes from hıs beıng the god takıng care of the raıns. As both are related wıth water, so sıgnıfıcant for the crops, Tsukuyomı and Susanoo are connected wıth the appearance of the last. Yet thıs ıs not suffıcıent enough to ınterpret them as one and the same god.

According to these versıons, the reason Susanoo does not take care of hıs domaıns but crıes, ıs the same as that stated ın *Kojıkı* — he wıshes to go to Ne-no-kunı. So Izanagı sends hım there.

It can be easıly seen from these narrations that whatever the dıfferences, they all end up wıth the sendıng of Susanoo to Ne-no-kunı. Thus we can say for sure that the unceasıng cryıng and Ne-no-kuni are both deeply related wıth Susanoo. Thıs connectıon and the ımage of Ne-no-kunı wıll be consıdered later. Now let us turn our attentıon to the dıvıne oath of Susanoo and Amaterasu.

(2) The Sacred Oath (*Ukehı*)

Consıderıng the reason for thıs oath (Amaterasu thinks her brother ıs coming to take over her domaıns) and the result of ıt (the future ancestor of the Japanese kıng ıs born as Amaterasu's chıld), ıt ıs clear enough that thıs myth ıs deeply related wıth the Yamato court and not so much wıth the orıgınal ımage of Susanoo. Besıdes, ıt cannot serve as a basıs for determınıng the character of thıs god, as thıs ıs done by Prof. Mızubayashı. Accordıng to hım, ın the *Kojıkı* Susanoo wıns the oath whıch proves hıs ınnocence and approves hım as a posıtıve god — the god of Water, at that — whıle in the *Nıhon shokı* he loses, thus gıvıng away hıs true ıntentıons to conquer Takama-ga-Hara, whıch

makes him an evil, negative god.[25] What seems to me more important in this myth, is that first, a descendant of Amaterasu is born, and second, that Susanoo actually proves to his sister that he does not come with aggressive intentions. These points are similar in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, although the ways the narrations develop are a little different. The starting point of both is that Amaterasu insists her brother has aggressive intentions, while Susanoo vows he has none. Yet in the *Kojiki* the condition is that the one who gives birth to girls is right. In order to prove his statement, that is, to win, Susanoo has to create girls and it comes naturally that the ancestor of the king is born by Amaterasu, whose statement proves wrong. In contrast to this, in the *Nihon shoki*, the one who gives birth to boys is proved to be the right, and Susanoo wins again, by creating boys. It seems a bit strange that the ancestor of the king, claimed to be a descendant of Amaterasu, is thus born to Susanoo, yet in Version III this is settled with the declaration of Amaterasu that if Susanoo wins by bearing boys, she will bring up these boys as her own children and will share with them the rule over her domains. And it is said that she really does so, eventually sending one of these children's son as a ruler of the Eight Islands. Thus, there is no contradiction with the following events.

The second point — the fact that in both annals Susanoo proves he does not wish to rule over Takama-ga-Hara — is quite important for the interpretation of this god. Yet still more important for this is the following story, the one about Susanoo's sins.

(3) Susanoo's sins

It is often said that in this story Susanoo is depicted as an opponent of Amaterasu. He commits awful sins, as a result of which the Heavenly gods expel him from Takama-ga-Hara.

In the main text the reason for Susanoo's violent deeds is not stated, and the compiler contents himself with mentioning only that after the Heavenly oath Susanoo's behavior was hideously bad. Still in Version III it is written that Susanoo's actions come out of envy. Here the story about the sins is set before the oath, so it has nothing to do with the joy at the demonstration of his innocence. That version explains that both Amaterasu and Susanoo took up the cultivating of rice fields, but those of Amaterasu were at a better place where the soil never dried up and no damage occurred. On the contrary, Susanoo's fields were at a place where either drought or too much rain caused damage to the crops. So Susanoo became envious of his sister's fertile fields and committed destructive actions against them. From this version we can also see that the factor which exclusively was thought to determine the quality of the harvest was the quantity of rainfall.

Susanoo's sins are of two kinds. The first are the violations against

Amaterasu's fields, of which there are two types — spring vıolations, lıke sowıng ın the already planted fıeld and destroyıng the dıtches, and autumn ones, lıke lettıng a horse run wıld ın the fıelds. The second kınd are vıolatıons durıng the tıme of sacred rıtuals — Susanoo secretly entered the room ın whıch Amaterasu had locked herself for the *Nu-name* rıtual[26] and contamınated ıts floor wıth hıs excrements. He also caused the death of a Heavenly Weavıng maıden by flınging down a skınned horse through the roof of Amaterasu's weavıng hall whıle sacred garment was beıng woven.

Commıttıng such sıns, Susanoo could not be allowed to remaın ın Takamaga-Hara any longer and the gods gathered to expel hım. It ıs ımportant to poınt out here the explanatıon of Motoorı Norınaga that contamınatıon was consıdered a sın, and sın was consıdered a contamınatıon[27] ın ancıent Japan. Yet I thınk the dıfference was made quıte dıstınctly, as contamınatıon was purıfied through the *mısogı* rıtual (the one Izanagı had to perform once he was out of the World of the Dead), whıle sıns were "purıfied," or rather "paıdoff," by the rıtual called *harae*, whıch ıncluded elements of punıshment, as we can judge from Susanoo's *harae*.[28]

After the *harae* rıtual, Susanoo agaın sets out for the land to which Izanagi, had sent hım, Ne-no kunı.

(4) Susanoo's beneficent deeds

It ıs saıd that from here lıes the contradıctıon ın Susanoo's character. And thıs statement ıs not unreasonable — the deıty who caused calamıtıes wıth hıs cryıng and commıtted heavy sıns ın Takama-ga-Hara, behavıng lıke the bad personage, does not show a sıngle negatıve feature here, but on the contrary — behaves lıke a beneficent hero. In the *Kojıkı*, where Susanoo's bad actıons are not revealed wıth so many detaıls, the part about hıs heroıc acts seemed no more than a step ın the growıng of a young man. Yet ın the *Nıhon shokı* both hıs negatıve and posıtıve actıons are clearly dıstınguished. And the myth about the appearance of the crops, as a turnıng poınt ın hıs ımage, ıs not there to smoothen the contrast. Straıght after hıs expulsıon from the Heavenly world, thıs god, on hıs way to Ne-no-kunı, appears ın the world of men and accomplıshes some beneficent deeds. Namely, he slays a gıant serpent and creates the dıfferent kınds of trees.

The myth about the serpent and Inada-hıme (= Kushınada-hıme) ıs wrıtten ın detaıl ın the Maın text, as well as ın Versıons II and III, beıng mentıoned also ın Versıons I and IV. As for the place where Susanoo descended from the Heavenly world, three spots are mentıoned: the upper stream of the rıver Hıı ın Izumo, the upper stream of the rıver E ın the land of Akı, and Soshımorı ın the land of Shıragı (= Sılla), and he kılls the serpent eıther ın the land of Izumo or ın the land of Akı.

When he comes down, according to the Main text, Susanoo meets an old pair, a husband (Ashinazuchi) and wife (Tenazuchi) who are crying. In Version II it is given that he meets a man and his pregnant wife, the name of the husband being Ashinazu-tenazu. According to Version III, Ashinazuchi and Tenazuchi lay down the term to kill the serpent if he wishes to marry their daughter (not because the serpent ate their children, as in the previous cases). Besides, it is only mentioned in Version I that Susanoo meets the daughter of Susa no Yatsumimi, the Mistress of the Rice-field Palace (Inada-miya Nushi) and she bears him children, while Version IV just tells that Susanoo heard of a man-eating serpent in the Torikami forest at the upper stream of the river Hii in Izumo, so he went there, took out his sword, and killed the beast, there being no mention of Inada-hime.

The way Susanoo killed the serpent is described with almost no differences - first, he gets him drunk with *sake*[29] and slays him while he is asleep. As for the serpent, it is pointed out that he eats people and is enormous of size. It is also written in almost all of the variations that a sacred sword is taken out of his tail. This sword is not presented to Amaterasu, as it is done in the *Kojiki*, but either offered to the Heavenly Gods, to Heaven, or kept in a shrine in the world of men (the Shrine of Atsuta).

Details about the marriage with Inada-hime are given only in the Main text and in Version II. According to the first, in a way similar to that described in the *Kojiki*, after the marriage, Susanoo and the maiden built a palace (*miya*) in the region of Susa in Izumo and Susanoo appointed his bride's father and mother (Ashinazuchi and Tenazuchi) *obito* (governors) of this palace, for which reason they were called Masters of the Rice-field Palace (Inada-miya Nushi).The second, as was mentioned before, names only the father Ashinazu-tenazu, whereas the mother is the Mistress of the Rice-field Palace under the name of Susa no Yatsumimi; after he marries their daughter, Ma-kamifuru Kushinada-hime, Susanoo takes her from Aki to Izumo (to the upper stream of the river Hii), where they live long and have children.

Finally, in the main text and in VersionVII, it is said that having thus lived for a certain time in the land of men, Susanoo found his way to Ne-no-kuni.

If we consider all this, it becomes clear that the story of Susanoo retold in the Main text and its six versions, in spite of the differences, strongly relates this god with the slaying of the giant serpent and with the maiden of the rice-fields, Inada-hime. This seems to me very important for the interpretation of his character.

Let us now turn our attention to the Versions IV and V of Susanoo's myth, which depict features of this god absent in the *Kojiki*. These are his relation with the trees and with Korea.

According to Version IV, Susanoo pulls out hairs from different parts of his

body, turns them ınto dıfferent kınds of trees, and determınıng the use of each kınd gıves them to hıs chıldren (Isotakeru-no-mıkoto, Ō-yatsu-hımemıkoto, Tsumatsu-hımemıkoto) to spread them ın Japan. In Versıon V we read that not Susanoo, but hıs son Isotakeru, who comes down from Takama-ga-Hara together wıth hıs father, havıng taken from there seeds of dıfferent trees, spreads them ın the Land of the Eıght Bıg Islands .

In the same Versıon V Susanoo and hıs son descend from the Heavenly world on the land of Sılla at the place called *Soshımorı*. Havıng lıved there for a whıle, they make a boat out of clay and come to the land of Izumo in Japan. At the same tıme, Versıon IV wrıtes that Susanoo saıd "there ıs gold and sılver in the land of *Kara*," from whıch ıt could be judged that he had fırst descended ın "the land of *Kara*, 韓国" that ıs, ın Korea. The development of the story in thıs versıon as well — after he had gıven the seeds of trees to hıs chıldren, Susanoo lıved for a whıle ın the regıon of Kumanarı-no-takı, and then went on to Ne-no-kunı — is also saıd to show a connectıon wıth Korea. That ıs, there ıs saıd to be a place ın Korea named Kumanarı-no-takı.[30] A place wıth the same name exısts ın Izumo, too, and ıs connected wıth *Kumano Taısha* (the Great Kumano Shrıne) there. To thıs we shall turn back later.

We have thus far traced the development of Susanoo's myth ın the *Kojıkı* and *Nıhon shokı*. Yet ın order to form the base for the further analysıs of Susanoo's character, let us examıne how thıs god ıs depıcted ın the *Fudokı* as well.

4. Susanoo ın the *Fudokı*

The *Fudokı* were compıled in the early eighth century as books containing geographıcal descrıptıons, legends, and other characterıstıcs of the provınces at the tıme, recorded by the governmental offıcıals of each provınce. The legends ıncluded there eıther come to explaın the orıgın of place names or are just storıes famous ın the regıon, that ıs, these legends are not lınked wıth each other ın a logıcal narratıon, but appear as separate narratıons and thus should gıve some ıdea of the Japanese gods before theır organızatıon ınto a pantheon. One could say at fırst glance that Susanoo ıs depıcted here quıte dıfferently from ın the previously dıscussed documents, and not a sıngle negatıve actıon ıs ascrıbed to hım.

It was mentıoned earlier that in the *Bungo Fudokı* Susanoo is identified with the god Mutō, who ıs saıd to ınhabıt the Northern Seas. The story goes that the god once went to meet the daughter of the deıty of the Southern Seas. On hıs way there he asked for shelter from two brothers wıth the famıly name of Shōraı. The elder brother, although he was rıch and had a lot of spare rooms ın the house, refused hım, whereas the younger one, though poor, ınvıted hım to stay and offered hım food. One year later on hıs way back, the god came

again and revealing his true self to the younger brother, taught him to put straw-wreaths on the waists of all his family members. These had to serve as a sign, as the god would bring epidemic disease to destroy all but the people who wore the straw-wreath on their waists.

In this myth it is said directly that Susanoo is a *banshin* (foreign god) and his image here is quite different from that of the above-described myths. For this reason the interpretation of this myth is also quite difficult. Here Susanoo seems to reward the people who respect him and severely punish the ones who do not.

There are several myths about Susanoo in the *Izumo Fudoki*. Of these, two main ones deserve to be mentioned. One is the famous myth included in the chapter about the village Susa as an explanation of the origin of its name. It was named Susa, because Susanoo liked the place, where his spirit wished to abide and named it after his own name, making "large *susa* field(s) and small *susa* field(s)" there. On the contrary, the name of this village where obviously this god was worshiped since very old times, is often said to have given him his name, interpreted in this case as "The Man (= *o*, 男) of Susa." It is very difficult to say though, which of the names was the first, as the meaning of the word "susa" is quite obscure. I will try to give here my own idea about it.

Motoori Norinaga has shown that sa is a word strongly connected with the rice-field cultivation. He points out such examples as the words *sa-bae*,[31] *sa-tsuki*,[32] *sa-nae*,[33] *sa-otome*,[34] *sa-biraki*,[35] and *sa-noboru*,[36] which are used today as well. It seems to me quite possible to say thus that *sa* means "rice" here. Ogawa Kōzō, a Japanese photographer who has his own interpretation of some Japanese myths, suggests the hypothesis that this sa comes from the Korean word for rice - *sal*. He points out that as there was no sound "l" in the Japanese language, this word was pronounced either "sa" as in the above examples, or "saru", as in the name of the god Saru-ta-hiko, whose connection with the rice field has been shown by many scholars.[37] Yet Ogawa Kōzō is not a historian and his theory is not considered seriously by the Japanese researchers, who prefer to seek native origin in the word *sa*. Anyway, even if we neglect this theory, we can say for sure that this word was quite identical for the ancient Japanese with the meaning of "rice," as far as activities on the rice-field were concerned. The word *su*, on the other hand, is explained by Norinaga as "the hairs of the face" (面の毛),[38] or beard. Thus I think that the word su-sa might be interpreted as a bunch of rice seedlings (like a man's beard), and the expression *susa no ta* suggests the image of a spring rice field full of bunches of rice-seedlings. And it is obviously connected exactly with the spring work on the rice field, as the examples given by Norinaga suggest.

In the logic of such an interpretation, the making of large and small *susa* fields by Susanoo should come to mean that he planted large and small fields

with rice-seedlings, which together with Version III of Susanoo's myth in the *Nihon shoki*, where the same action is ascribed to him, could be a significant point in the interpretation of this god. It comes to mean that Susanoo was related with the beginning of the work on the rice-fields in spring.

The other important legend in the *Izumo Fudoki* is the one included in the description of the village of Sase, ō-hara district. It too is an explanation of the place's name. It is said that Susanoo once danced there with leaves of "sase" (or "sasa" — bamboo grass) on his head and that one of the leaves had fallen down onto the ground, from where the name of the village came.

However, Susanoo is connected with a few more places in the *Fudoki*. For example, the village Yasugi in the Uda district received its name because Susanoo, when passing through it, said that his heart found peace (yasugi) there; or the region of Mimoro in the O-hara district was so called because Susanoo built a *muro* (御室)[39] in which he spent the night.

We can thus see, that in the *Fudoki* not a word is mentioned about Susanoo's causing disasters with his crying, of his sins in Amaterasu's domains, and of his slaying of the enormous serpent.

Yet before closing the examination of Susanoo in the *Fudoki*, I would like to direct your attention to a myth that might prove quite important for the interpretation of this god. It is written in *Izumo Fudoki*, in the paragraph about the village Asakumi in the Shimane district. This is the myth about the Great God of Kumano (Kumano-ō-kami), and reports that this god has determined the morning and evening *mike* (offerings). The expression *kamu-kai* here, according to the notes above the text, indicates the rice-ears offered to the gods. It is said also that this god has determined the five *be-min* (groups with hereditary functions) responsible for the food offerings to the gods. One of their responsibilities was to offer clean water to the gods every morning. We should note here the following. First, Susanoo is the god worshiped at *Kumano Taisha* (both the one of Shimane prefecture, and the one in Wakayama prefecture), so the Great God of Kumano must either be Susanoo, or be in a deep relation with him. Second, the way the Great God of Kumano takes care of the food offerings to the Heavenly gods reminds us of the way Susanoo (in the *Kojiki*) was worried that ō-getsu-hime (the goddess who offered food to the Gods) would offer unclean food to them.

Having thus inspected the way that Susanoo is depicted in the *Fudoki*, we shall further try to figure out the original image of this god, who occupies the second important place in the Japanese mythology after the Sun-goddess Amaterasu and is deeply connected with the work in the rice fields. In order to correctly analyze the seemingly contradictional negative and positive actions ascribed to him in the above-examined documents, I prefer to treat the information they supply as a whole, and combine it with the information which

can be acquired about the shrines worshiping this god and the rituals connected with him.

But before taking up this task, I would like to confirm the position of Susanoo in the myths of Japan by a structural comparison between him and Amaterasu.

5. The two main heroes of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*: Susanoo and Amaterasu

According to most of the Japanese scholars, Amaterasu and Susanoo are made an opposing pair of brother and sister out of clear political reasons by the compilers of the above-discussed books. Yet, the way the two gods appear in the myths seems to suggest a deeper and older connection between them. I will come back to discuss this connection again, but it would be good to examine here in short their relation in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, which will serve as a base for the further analysis.

First of all, it should be noted that both of these gods are depicted as progenitors of rulers of Ashihara no Nakatsu-kuni. This shows that originally both of them were treated as equally great. This is revealed in the following episodes:

(1) Susanoo (before Amaterasu) sends ōnamuchi — from Ne-no-kuni — subjecting him to severe tests and being stolen the sacred regalia by him, as the Lord of the Great Land[40] (ōkuninushi).
(2) Amaterasu sends Ninigi — from Takama-ga-Hara — first having reduced the Land to submit to him and then bestowing upon him the regalia, as Ruler[41] of the Land of the Young Rice-ears, the Rich Land in the Reed-Plain (Toyo-Ashihara-mizuho-no-kuni).

Secondly, it can be pointed that both of these gods unwillingly cause calamities to the world.

(1) When Susanoo cried the green trees withered, the rivers dried up and "*the sound of bad deities was like unto 'the flies in the fifth moon'*[42] *as they swarmed, and in all things every portent of woe arose.*"[43]
(2) When Amaterasu retired into the Heavenly cave, both Takama-ga-Hara and the Land of the Reed Plain became dark and "*the voices of the myriad*[44] *deities were like unto the flies in the fifth moon as they swarmed, and the myriad portents of woe all arose.*"[45]

It is clear from these paragraphs that either by drought or by darkness, both gods caused misfortunes for a certain period. Now, it is often argued that this is not true, as actually Susanoo was the reason for Amaterasu's retirement into

the cave. Yet at the base of this episode stays a natural phenomenon, the night or the solar eclipse, so originally it must have had nothing to do with Susanoo.

The third point is that both of these gods are connected with the rice field.

(1) In the *Kojiki* it is not said directly that Susanoo plants a rice field, but he is said to construct Inada-miya, a Palace of the Rice Field (in the myth about the serpent) and to appoint its governor. The word *miya*, originally meaning "sacred abode" and later coming to be used in the sense of "palace," also gives another nuance to the meaning of the whole phrase. That is, it seems quite clear that Susanoo built a place where offerings of rice were to be performed, not just a residence.

In this annal it is not directly mentioned whether or not Amaterasu's also planted a rice field as well. Yet it is said that Susanoo violated "the rice-fields laid out by the Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity."[46]

At the same time the *Nihon shoki* tells in detail about the planting of rice fields by the side of these two gods.

(2) There is a myth in *Nihon shoki* explaining that the Sun and the Moon never meet because the god of the Moon, Tsukuyomi, slew the goddess Uke-mochi who secured food for the Heavenly gods. There Amaterasu is said to take the seeds of the crops born from the body of the dead goddess and plant them in different fields, proclaiming that they must serve as food for the people. She also took special care of the rice fields, dividing them to *sa-ta* and *naga-ta* (*ta* = rice-field) and appointed chiefs of the villages.

(3) Another myth was also mentioned already — the one of the envy of Susanoo for the fertile fields of his sister. This myth tells us that both gods cultivated rice fields at the same time.

(4) A myth exists in the *Fudoki* where Susanoo plants the "large *susa-ta*" and "small *susa-ta*," which was also shown earlier.

What must have lain at the base of such a symmetrical exposition of these two gods? Was it really thought up in order to show the greatness of the king's ancestress and the rivalry of Susanoo against her? Considering the above episodes, it seems to me that there must have been a strong connection between these two gods in the minds of the ancient Japanese. It does not much look like it was suddenly created at a certain historical period, without any roots, without any deep reason.

II. THE WORK ON THE RICE FIELD AND SUSANOO

1. Inada-hime and Susanoo

In order to understand the connection of Susanoo with the rice field, we should consider closely the myth about his slaying of the serpent and marriage with Inada-hime. As seen before, this myth is written in detail in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, and, though absent in the *Fudoki* as a whole, we find out about the appointment of the *hime's* father as Governor of the Palace of the Rice Fields (Inada-miya-nushi) and of Inada-hime herself, seeking for a place to deliver her child there. This reveals it as quite an old Japanese myth.

Yet this kind of myth is not confined within the limits of Japan alone, but traces of it can be found in different parts of the world. As an example of this, a Bulgarian folk-story with the similar contents and a Polish legend about St. Joseph could be given.

This story has several variations in Bulgarian folklore, but in most of the cases the hero goes through a well from the upper to the lower world where he finds old people crying (husband and wife or a mother only) and hears the reason - a man-eating giant serpent is devouring their daughters. Many young men had tried to slay the beast, but no one had succeeded so far. The serpent has required the girls' sacrifice as a condition for supplying water, and the hero finds the old people at the moment they are preparing their last daughter for him. He is promised the hand of the maiden in case he manages to defeat the serpent. The beast is first liquored up with rakia (the traditional alcoholic drink in Bulgaria) and then slain in his sleep. The hero then marries the maiden and takes her to the upper world with him.[47] It is obvious that this story is quite similar to the story of Susanoo and Inada-hime.

A Polish legend tells that St. Joseph, during his wanderings around the world, passed through a Polish village at the very moment when the chief's daughter was being prepared for sacrifice to Topiel, the beast god of the river Vitsula. St. Joseph saves the maiden, marries her as he had been promised, and takes her with him.[48] The resemblance of this legend to the Japanese myth indicates that, as many scholars have already pointed out, the eating of girls by the serpent symbolizes the sacrifice of young girls to the god of the river, a ritual considered important for irrigation. Human offerings did not occur in Japan, yet the problem here is not the historical situation with the sacrifice, but the fact that this episode exists in Japanese mythology. The Polish legend tells in detail about that ritual. Every year, by divination, one of the most beautiful young girls in the village was to go down into the river Vitsula in sacrifice to the god of the river, Topiel. For three months before the day of the sacrifice, the chosen girl was to live as a princess in a dwelling built especially

for that purpose, surrounded by her friends who served and amused her. It was believed that she was to go to Topiel's palace at the bottom of the river and become one of his wives. If the offering was not made, Topiel would become angry and bring either floods or drought, causing a poor harvest and death. St. Joseph argued that the Christian God, who is much stronger than the gods of the rivers, mountains, and so on, allows no human sacrifice. He told the people to stop the sacrifice of young girls to Topiel. Then, on the day when the big disaster was bound to occur, thanks to the prayer of St. Joseph, God lulled Topiel and the other gods to sleep and nothing bad happened. St. Joseph thus won over the village shamaness and saved the maiden, for which the people of the village celebrated him as a hero.

The base for the three stories seems one and the same to me. Yet, in the case of the Bulgarian folk-story and the Polish legend, the narration has moved away from the original form and the connection with irrigation has become (especially in the Bulgarian story) weak. In contrast to this, it is clear in the Japanese myth. If we exclude the link with the (rice) field, the message of the story becomes obscure, shaping the Bulgarian story into a simple heroic folk-tale and the Polish legend into part of the biography of a saint who had abolished human sacrifice in a certain region. On the contrary, through the connection with the rice field in the Japanese myth, a picture of the ancient world opens before our eyes. And the three main points of the narration acquire concrete meaning:

(1) A young maiden, whose name is Ina-da,[49] is apparently related to the rice field, and is sacrificed to a giant serpent, the god of the river on whom the irrigation depends.
(2) A young man (god) from the world above defeats the giant serpent.
(3) The newly arrived god marries the maiden symbolizing the rice field.

Thus, as a logical development of the story, the newly arrived god builds *Inada-miya* (the palace or place for worship in the rice field), appoints its governor, and cultivates rice fields. But why does the hero of this myth appear to be Susanoo? The theory that he was worshiped as one of the peaceful gods of the fields does not explain why he was to fulfill such a heroic task. Again, the theory that Susanoo was the god of the sailors of the Kii region, having no roughness in his character nor connection with the sun-goddess Amaterasu, does not answer why he comes to cultivate rice fields in Izumo. The fact that this god-hero was connected with the rice fields can also be seen from the festivals based on old rituals, which still take place every year in different regions of Japan. One such festival is carried out in the place called Izumo-sho (*sho* = manor), in the Yamato region. The river Hatsuse passes through this place and

at the small Susanoo Shrine on its western bank, a Rope ritual (Ō-tsuna matsuri) takes place. It reproduces the myth about Susanoo and Inada-hime praying for rich harvest.

2. Susanoo and the grain-crops

I would like to consider here the relation between Susanoo and the rice field, as expressed in the myth about the appearance of the crops and in the nature of the shrines called *Kumano*.

(1) Susanoo's role in the myth about the appearance of the crops

Why was Susanoo made the main character of that myth? According to Nishimiya Kazutami, it was not Susanoo, but the heavenly gods who asked for food from the goddess Ō-getsu-hime. Chamberlain translates the sentence after the paragraph of Susanoo's expulsion in the following way: "Again he begged food of the Deity Princess-of-Great-Food,"[50] or Ō-getsu-hime. In the Japanese text though, the word "he" does not exist and Prof. Nishimiya insists that because the word "again" is used right after the sentence in which the subject is the "eight myriad gods," the same subject should serve for both sentences.[51] Thus the meaning of this myth acquires quite a different nuance. That is, after they had purified Susanoo from the sins through the *o-harae* ritual, the Heavenly gods, as usual, asked for food from the goddess who took care of it — Ō-getsu-hime. But here, Susanoo, on his way to Ne-no-kuni, happened to see how the goddess produced the food she served to the Gods, and found it unclean. Susanoo could not allow this, so he slew the goddess.

(2) Susanoo as the god of Kumano Shrine

Why should Susanoo, if he is connected only with the work in the rice field, care so much about the food offered to the gods? In order to explain this, let us look closer into the nature of the Kumano shrines, in which Susanoo is worshiped. To point out some of these shrines, we can turn to the list of shrine names of the Engi period (901-923), *Engi-shiki Jinmei-chō*. Among the many examples entered there are that in Ōmi (Takashima district), Etchū (Nei district), and Tango (Kumano district). Yet, there are two Great Kumano Shrines (*Kumano Taisha*) — one in the former Kii (now Wakayama prefecture), and the other in Izumo (now Shimane prefecture).

The *Kumano Taisha* of Izumo is said to be deeply related with the nearby mountain called Tengu. This mountain stands on the border between the districts of Yatsuka and Nogi in Shimane prefecture and is said to have been the original place of the shrine. The characters for the mountain's name are 天狗, the same ones used for the longed-nosed goblin *tengu* connected with Buddhist ideas of later times, yet it is quite possible that this comes from the similar

pronunciation of the word 天宮[52] meaning "heavenly palace" and possibly indicating the Heavenly palace of saints in Taoism. From this mountain, two rivers, very important for the irrigation of the valleys of the villages below, begin. And it is said in the records of the shrine that the god bringing fertility via these rivers was believed to abide in that mountain.

Now, the god worshiped in this shrine is Kushi-mike-nu, a name clearly connected with the abundance of food. In the shrine's records this deity is said to be identical with Susanoo, a paragraph from *Izumo Fudoki* being given as evidence, but most of Japanese historians seem to be more inclined to take this relation as a product of later times. Yet the problem remains — why was Susanoo, if he has nothing to do with the provision of food, related with this shrine? If his relation with Amaterasu was made up out of political reasons, why should the relation with this shrine be made up? I think that there must be a deep reason for this relation.

To the east of Mt. Tengu, there is an old shrine connected with *Kumano Taisha*. This is Yamasa Shrine in the district of Nogi. It is entered in the *Engi-shiki Jinmei-chō* as Kushi-mike-nu Shrine, which means it worships a god related with food. Thus it appears that both to the east and to the west sides of the Mt. Tengu, the same god of food is worshiped. To put it in another way, the Mt. Tengu, on whose rivers the irrigation depended, marks the center, on the east and west sides of which, in the Yamasa Shrine and the Great Kumano Shrine, the god taking care of the food was worshiped.

In the *Kumano Taisha* of Kii, three gods are worshiped, namely Ketsu miko (Susanoo), Hayatama, and Fusumi. Yet Prof. Matsumae supposes that originally it was one god that was divided into three later. The god Ketsumiko here clearly shows a connection with the above-mentioned Kushi-mike-nu, as the syllable *ke* (食) means "food," so this must be a god connected with food.

It is thus plain that in both Great Kumano Shrines gods of the same nature are worshiped. Why were these shrines, then, related with Susanoo? Might it not be that the meaning of the word *kuma* could give us the key to this question?

There are different suggestions about the meaning of this word, yet I am inclined to take that proposed in the *Senshū Wamyō Ruijū-sho*,[53] which gives the old, forgotten till now interpretation. It says that *kuma* was the name given to the rice offered to the gods. It thus appears that Kumano Shrine should indicate the place where sacred rice (= food) was offered to the gods. It can be supposed that such places should have existed at many places all around the country, and they were all called shrines of the *kuma*, or Kumano Shrine. The biggest offerings were made in Kii and Izumo, where the shrines became Great Shrines, or *taisha*.

If we now come back to the myth in which Susanoo takes special care of the

ritual cleanliness of the food offered to the gods, we can see his relation with the Kumano Shrines. I do not say with this that he was a god of fertility, but I suggest that he might have been the priest who carried out the sacred offerings. As the priest was often considered a sacred person, the priest with such an important for the fertility function should have become identical with the god he served. Let us remember the relation of the name of Susanoo with the Korean word for "shaman," discussed earlier.

Why can we not take Susanoo for the god of rich harvest? Because in ancient times, as we can see from the example of ancient myths, people believed in simpler, more concrete gods. The god, or rather gods, of rich crops, were the gods of the sun, the rain, the rivers, that is, those on whom a good harvest depended. In Japan, where rice had been by far the most important crop, the quantity of rain should be considered of primal importance for the rich harvest. Thus, the task of the priest of the Kumano Shrines should have been to secure abundant, but not too much, rainfall during the rice growing season. We can now see why Susanoo was so deeply connected with rainwater.

3. The relation between the actions of Susanoo and the ritual prayers for rain

Let us examine here if Susanoo has any connection with prayers for abundant rain.

First of all, consider the myth about the slaying of the serpent. It could be interpreted that when the people had just planted the rice seedlings, a god came from the upper (the heavenly) world, to secure abundant water for the crops by over-powering the giant serpent — the one who controls the flow of water. Does this not resemble the priest's offering of sacred drinks to the serpent-water-god, in order to secure enough water for the crops? Then the hero marries the maiden promised to the serpent, which strongly resembles a fertility ritual between the priest and a sacred maiden. And finally the hero makes sacred fields, where rice for the sacred offerings is planted.

At the same time Susanoo is connected with other rituals that clearly are prayers for rain. Thus in the *Nihon shoki* it is said that this god comes down from Takama-ga-Hara during a heavy rain, wearing *kasa* (straw hat) and garment used to protect one from the rain. Such a figure is said to be the personage of a Korean dance for rain.[54]

On the other hand, his action of skinning and flinging the horse also seems to have the meaning of praying for rain. The offerings in this case were usually of bulls or cows, horses, or other animals, and it was carried out by special people, emigrants from the continent. There are records in the *Engi-shiki* about the skinning of different animals, which were obviously used in such rituals.[55] There are records in *Shoku-nihongi* too specially noting that it was forbidden to worship the Han god(s) (漢神) with the sacrifice of bulls or cows.[56]

This means that such rituals, connected with prayers for rain, were actually carried out in Japan. It is even possible that the word "Han god(s)" means the giant dragon who brings rain.

And finally, in the *Nihon shoki*, in the records of Emperor Kōgyoku (1st year, 7th month), there is a part about a big drought in the country. Among the rituals for rain there, the killing of bulls or cows and horses is mentioned. According to Prof. Matsumae, traces of such rituals can be found in the later folklore too, and these are prayers for rain by killing bulls or cows and throwing them into the rivers and ponds (or throwing straw images of them in the water supplies nearby), as well as by washing horses in the rivers. He gives the example of Niu-kawakami Shrine,[57] where as a prayer for good weather a white horse was sacrificed, while as a prayer for rain a black one was offered to the gods. The professor explains that such rituals for rain in which a bull, a cow, or a horse was killed, were of Chinese or Korean origin, and in Japan the killing and skinning of the animals for it was carried out by immigrants from the continent, called *toraijin*.

We can thus see that Susanoo has a deep connection with the rituals for rain from the continent. Can we not simply say then, that this is a foreign god, having no deep connection with the Japanese pantheon? Even if it were so, it would not finish the problem of his interpretation. Japanese scholars who deal with comparative mythology have found foreign traces in the character of the most important Japanese gods, including Amaterasu and Takami-musubi, yet it is most clear that sun-worship in the boundaries of Japan lay at the base of Amaterasu, and that Takami-musubi has Japanese roots as well. If Susanoo, thus, had absolutely no roots in the Japanese beliefs, why should have he been depicted as the second (after Amaterasu) great personage in the mythological records? And if he has Japanese roots, what are they?

I think we should seek these roots in his deep connection with rain. The legend of the shaman who managed to control the abundance of rain with his magic might have entered Japan in those early times. That shaman might have become sacred, that is, become god himself. Thus the Korean *susung* = shaman might have been transformed in Japan into Susanoo, the god who was expected to bring the rain needed for rich crops.

Yet, not every year brings a rich harvest, and the main factor on which good crops depend is the quantity of rainwater. When there is too much rain, floods and other disasters occur; when rain is scarce, drought comes together with hunger and epidemics. For all these disasters, the god who was supposed to provide the sufficient quantity of rain, Susanoo, was to be blamed. In connection with this we can remember the myth in which Susanoo did not carry out his role (ruling over the Sea-Plain), but cried and thus brought drought. This is certainly a myth deeply connected with the Japanese environment, based on

the native experience of the people of the archipelago, who must have decided that drought occurs when Susanoo does not do his job properly. Yet apparently, before Susanoo had entered as the god who can bring rain, the god Watatsumi had been worshiped as an ocean deity. Thus it was impossible for Susanoo to be considered as the ruler of the Sea-Plain. In the imagination of the ancient Japanese, rain must have been connected with the water that comes from outside with the clouds, and as the clouds were not permanently existent at the same place (as the sea is), Susanoo was thought to come during a certain period from the outside, too. This far-away place where Susanoo lived was Ne-no-kuni. He had to come with the rainy season, right after the rice was planted (which coincides exactly with the rainy period in Japan), and bring the right quantity of rain. This was one of the decisive factors for a rich harvest. The other factor of primal importance was the sun.

4. The God of the Rainwater and the Goddess of the Sun

We already traced the parallel ways in which Amaterasu and Susanoo were depicted in ancient Japanese mythology. Although the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were compiled out of political purposes, I think the relation between these two gods has deeper roots and the connection between them, though modified, was not fully made up by the compilers of these works. What were the roots of this relation?

There is a small, but quite old shrine to the east of Mt. Miwa in Yamato, called Ō-jinja (多神社). Today it worships the god Yaimimi, who is mentioned in the Japanese records of mythology as the elder brother of the legendary king Jimmu. Yet in older times different gods seem to have been worshiped there. It is mentioned in the medieval record called *Yamato-kuni Go-gun Jinja-ki* (Records of the Shrines of Five Villages in Yamato) that two of the four gods worshiped at this shrine were Mi-shiritsu-hiko (水知津彦神) and Hi-shiritsu-hime (火知津姫神), and that the full name of the shrine was Ōni-imasu Mi-shiri-tsu-hiko Shrine (多坐弥志理都比古神社, the shrine of Mi-shiri-tsu-hiko in Ō). As fire was deeply connected with the rituals of sun-worship in ancient times, I think we can allow ourselves to assume that *hi* (=火= fire) in the name Hi-shiritsu-hime was used in the sense of *hi* (=日= sun). It is known that there were people in ancient Japan who read the motion of the sun and who were called *hi-jiri*.[58] *Jiri* comes from *shiru*, "to know, to understand," from which we can judge that these were people who "knew, understood" the motion of the sun = *hi*. Yet, in the above case the word *mi-shiri* is also used, possibly with the meaning "to understand the water" (water = *mi*), though it is not known if such an occupation actually existed. But I think that as both the sun and the rainwater were of crucial importance for the growing of the crops, there must have been a way to foretell rains, too, by watching the

clouds, for example. Even today it is very important to plant the rice neither too early (too far from the rainy season), nor too late (when the rainy season has already begun). So we can see how important it is to know exactly when the rainy season is about to come. And not having today's appliances for weather forecast, the ancient Japanese must have had their own way to tell about the coming of the rainy season. Still, we can suppose that a deep relation existed between the shamans who foretold the rainy season and Susanoo. Might it be not that a male shaman who foresaw the rain (*Mi-shiritsu-hiko*), and a female shamaness who read the motion of the sun (*Hi-shiritsu-hime*) fulfilled different rites in the above-mentioned shrine and later became worshiped there as gods themselves? I do not know of other examples where that couple was worshiped in Japan, yet water and fire are deeply related in many old Japanese rituals, and having in mind the myth about Izanami who departed for the land of the dead on account of the fire-god, it is more likely, that the fire in these rituals symbolizes the sun, not the god of fire.

We should also take into account here the myths about the marriage of the maiden of the rice field and the god supposed to bring water (either the giant serpent or Susanoo), and that of Ninigi's descendant Hoori-no-mikoto (said to be a deity deeply related with the rice field) who marries the daughter of the God of Seas (Watatsumi no Kami), Toyotama-hime appearing in the form of a water animal. The symbolic meaning of these myths is quite clear: the union between a deity of the rice field and one who would bring water is of vital importance for the crops. We must note, though, that the marriage is not between the deities of the sun and water, but between those of the rice field and water.

I would like to stress here that Susanoo was not taken directly as the god of water, as Watatsumi no Kami, but was a god of a little different character. In the same way Amaterasu should not be interpreted directly as the goddess of the sun, but as a goddess who has derived from a sun-deity.[59] Actually, the prototypes of these gods were priestly persons who carried out the vitally important rituals for sufficient rainwater and sunshine for the crops. In order to provide a rich harvest, each of them had to be married ritually to a deity of the rice field. Thus their relation was not linked by marriage, but by the relationship which Yanagita Kunio called *hiko-hime*, and which should be better translated as "brother-sister" rather than simply "man-woman." Many examples could be given of such a relation in Japan, especially from the pages of the *Fudoki*, where such pairs compete in land-claimings (*kuni-shime*), rice-planting, and other activities connected with work in the rice field.

Then, at a certain moment of the historical development, when the myths were systematized to be recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, adopting the pattern of this *hime-hiko* system, the hime in this couple was transformed into

to the ancestress of the king, while the *hiko* had naturally also entered the myth — as the brother. As they were originally worshiped on the same level, they were depicted as gods of the same rank. Traces of this equality of worship are difficult to find in Japan today, because all the myths were transformed in accordance with the privileged position of Amaterasu and the whole framework of shrines and rituals was subdued to that idea as well. Yet, I think that the relation between them is still transparent in the myths.

The problem that remains is whether or not Susanoo was revealed as accomplishing negative deeds only for political reasons. Although such an explanation would suit quite well those who stress that political intentions were the motive for the compilation of the annals, I think the image of this god originally had in its base deep reasons for such a depiction. That is, as mentioned above, connected with the fact that not every year is beneficial, not every year the rains fall in the exact amount needed for the crops. Contrary to the sun, the rain is difficult to predict - there is a strict regularity in the motion of the sun and, and though its strength differs with the seasons, the sun shines with a certain regularity during the year, while the rain does not always submit to the rules. There is a period called tsuyu, which is translated as "rainy season" on which the growth of the crops in Japan depends, yet as seen from the examples of 1993's abundant summer rains and the following year's lack of sufficient rainfall, both of which brought great damage to the crops in Japan and caused permission of rice imports for the first time after World War II, one can see that even nowadays farming in this country largely depends on the quantity of rainfall, to say nothing of the time when irrigation was not so efficient as today. And we should note that in such cases of weather irregularities, the people do not say the sun has been too weak or too strong, but that it has rained too much or too little. In other words, it is not the sun, but the rain that is being blamed for the disasters that such irregularities cause. Thus, in the old times people obviously blamed the god who was supposed to secure sufficient rain, or the diviner who had not predicted the rainy season correctly, for the misfortune of a poor harvest and all of the other disasters connected with the abundance (for example, floods) or the shortage of enough rain (drought, epidemics). From there arose the contradictive image of Susanoo in the Japanese myths.

III. NE-NO-KUNI (THE LAND OF ROOTS) AND SUSANOO

1. Ne-no-kuni as a reviving tunnel

Apart from being depicted as a god strongly related with the providing of rainfall for the crops, Susanoo is said to abide in the Land of Roots, Ne-no-kuni.

The name is translated by Chamberlain as "The Netherland," yet whether or not it was identical for the ancient Japanese with the World of the Dead = Yomi-no-kuni, is a big question. According to the notes at the back of the Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei edition of the *Nihon shoki*, the word *yomi* in Yomi no kuni comes from the word *yami* (闇) meaning "darkness."[60] At the same time, it is noted there that the word Ne-no-kuni, described in the Ō-*harae Norito* (the Big prayer for *harae* purification) as a place deep under the sea, was explained by Yanagita Kunio to have been thought of as a place beyond the sea. It was shown by Yanagita, as well as by many other Japanese scholars, that these two places were not originally considered identical by the Japanese. Besides, it seems that while Yomi-no-kuni was imagined as the world in which the souls abide after death, Ne-no-kuni was thought of as a place of revival, as in the myth about Ōnamuchi. With time, though, the idea of these two places had merged into one, and we read in the records of the "deceased mother's land" the meaning of Ne-no-kuni. The basis for this merging, I think, comes from the connection of them both with darkness. Many Japanese scholars have taken Ne-no-kuni as a bright and abundant world beyond the sea, identical with Tokoyo-no-kuni, but I think these two were also different places at first. Ne-no-kuni, as its name shows, should have been imagined as a dark place, deep under, rather than beyond, the Sea-Plain, as the domains of the sea are called in Japanese myths. At the same time, darkness not only had a negative, unclean impression on the ancient people as in the picture of Yomi-no-kuni, it also evoked the impression of mystery, and it is not by chance that most of the Shinto rituals are carried out in the darkness of the night. This notion of darkness is quite well noted by Ogawa Kōzō, who explains this phenomenon with the image of the reviving strength of the dark tunnel in the beliefs of old Japan.[61] The Japanese believed that the sun falls down into one dark hole in the evening, to be reborn from another one in the morning, passing during the night through the long, dark tunnel between these two holes. Ogawa Kōzō explains this in connection with the word *hotoke*, which he sees coming from the meaning of a sacred vessel made in the V-shape, to resemble snake-hole, from which sacred ancestral spirits were believed to appear. He says it was also believed that if a sick person passes through the dark tunnel between two holes, he would be sure to get well. That is, the dark passage between the two holes possessed for the ancient Japanese revitalizing powers.

What is the relation between such a revitalizing tunnel and Susanoo? Let us remember here that a myth tells how Ōnamuchi entered Ne-no-kuni through the fork (*mata*) of a tree in Kii, and got out of it at Yomotsuhira-saka in Izumo. And what he did in Ne-no-kuni was all connected with his becoming in a way another man — it was his rebirth. To explain a little, the tormented,

weak, young boy became a strong man who overpowered his elder brothers and became Ōkuninushi, The Lord of the Great Land. If we consider this myth from the standpoint of the "snake-hole" belief, we would be surprised by the resemblance of the idea. The consideration of Kii and Izumo as the entrance to (the first) and the exit from (the latter) Ne-no-kuni can be assumed from other Japanese myths as well. Were they not considered as such in ancient times? Between these two holes (the entrance and the exit), the god Susanoo abides, who worked for the transformation of Ōnamuchi into Ōkuninushi.

Another thing deserving attention is the fact that the two Great Kumano shrines, which I consider as places where sacred rice was offered to the gods, stay exactly at the spots of the entrance to and exit from Ne-no-kuni - in Kii and in Izumo. Each of them faces the sea, deep under which, I think, the ancient Japanese believed to be Ne-no-kuni. This is a way to see the mysterious relation between these two places. It is also worth mentioning the observation of Japanese scholars that most of the shrines in each of these lands has a corresponding one in the other, and that there are many common place names in both lands.[62] It is quite interesting that most of these places and shrines are connected with Susanoo and his descendants.

Thus, we can assume that Susanoo was needed in Ne-no-kuni, the reviving tunnel, in order to secure the rebirth of the crops and the growing of the rice. He had to come down from the Heavenly world in order to provide the rainfall necessary for the growing of the rice, to take control of the water by defeating the giant serpent who held it, and to promise rich crops by his marriage with the maiden of the rice field, finally settling in Ne-no-kuni, the place from which the crops would come up reborn.

2. The alteration of the image of Ne-no-kuni and its connection with the alteration of the character of Susanoo

The question here is why Ne-no-kuni, if it was related with such reviving powers, was pictured in the Ō-*harae Norito* as the place of the *tsumi* (sins) and *kegare* (contamination, uncleanness)? The three legendary *kuni* in Japanese mythology, Ne-no-kuni, Yomi-no-kuni, and Tokoyo-no-kuni, seem to be connected with quite old beliefs. Yet, by the time the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were written, these beliefs seem to have become mixed with and influenced by ideas brought in from the continent. That is, Tokoyo-no-kuni was obviously connected with Taoistic ideas and seen as the land of saints and abundance beyond the sea. On the other hand, Ne-no-kuni, because of its image of darkness became identified with Yomi-no-kuni, and with the time it also came to be considered as the world of the dead. And as the world of the dead was considered unclean, this notion was transferred to Ne-no-kuni as well. From the world where the spirit went to be reborn and revitalized, it became the place

from which evils came out and to which they had to be driven back. As I mentioned earlier, Motoori Norinaga says that in old times evil was considered identical to uncleanness. Thus Ne-no-kuni and the god who lived there, Susanoo, were related with that idea. This notion was further developed, and with that the image of Susanoo was been subjected to change. Rather than being related with the offerings of sacred rice to the gods, which stood in contradiction to the image of Ne-no-kuni, he was more and more connected with its new characteristics — contamination and evil. And from there, the seemingly contradictory character of this god, whose actions then acquired a slightly different meaning. He started to be blamed not only for not bringing enough rain for a successful harvest, but for all calamities, and his character became still more and more connected with wildness and roughness. Thus he eventually came to fit the role of the counterpart of Amaterasu in the royal myth.

CONCLUSION

I would like to turn back again to the creation of the documents in the highlight of the above analysis. It was mentioned that there are a great number of identical shrines and place names in the regions of the former Kii and Izumo, most of which are related to Susanoo and his offspring. Yet it deserves to be noted that there is not a shrine among these related with Ōnamuchi (or Ōkuninushi).

On the other hand, in the *Izumo Fudoki*, unlike in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, Ōnamuchi is not considered a descendant of Susanoo, but of *Ame-no shita tsukurashishi Ō-kami*, "the Great god who built the world under the Heaven."

And at last it is worth pointing out that Ō-kuninushi is considered identical with *Ōmononushi*, the god worshiped at the Ō-Miwa Shrine in Yamato. The worship of the god of Mt. Miwa is said to be connected with the most ancient beliefs in Japan. The older name of this mountain was Mimoro and there are a lot of poems in the *Man'yōshū*, in which it is mentioned. Also, according to the *Kojiki*, the daughter of this god, Isukeyori-hime, was to become the official wife of Emperor Jinmu, which means that at the time the record was written, the god of this shrine was considered quite significant.

Another very important paragraph related to it is found in the records of Emperor Sūjin in the *Kojiki*. It is said that there were a lot of epidemics at the time and after a divination it became clear that these were the result of a curse from the god *Ōmononushi*. The god promised to stop the sufferings if he was properly worshiped at his shrine. Why had this emperor evoked the anger of

the god of Mt. Miwa? This is not explained directly in any of the records, but in the *Nihon shoki*, shortly before the part about the curse, we read about the following events. In the sixth year of his rule, the emperor had decided to move the sanctuary of the deities Amaterasu Ō-mi-kami and Yamato Ō-kuni-dama out of the palace. Until that their sacred objects had been worshiped in the very rooms of the emperor, yet the ruler was afraid to live together with the great gods. So he ordered a priestess to be attached to each of them and their shrines to be built away from his quarters. Amaterasu's shrine is said to have been built first in the village Kasanui in Yamato. According to one of the theories about this place today, as written in the notes above the text in the *Nihon shoki* (Iwanami edition), it was located on the territory of Miwa Shrine. It is obvious that to place the great goddess, considered ancestress of the Imperial family, onto the grounds of the Great Shrine of Miwa, undoubtedly meant to ignore the god worshiped there. Was this not the reason for the calamities which Ōmononushi = Ōkuninushi evoked? Would this god get angry if he had not been a grand god himself, long before the elevation of Amaterasu to the top of the pantheon?

There is one more example when Ōmononushi requires proper worship. This is the paragraph where Sukuna-bikona (the god who helps Ōkuninushi to "build the world") departs for Tokoyo-no-kuni and Ōkuninushi is worried about how he will manage alone. There the god Ōmononushi appears (it is explained that this is another *tama* = soul, spirit of the god Ōkuninushi), and promises to help if he is honored by proper rituals at Mt. Miwa.

What connects this god so strongly with Mt. Miwa? What connects the Izumo legend of "the Great god who built the world under Heaven" with this mountain in Yamato? And what is their relation with the myth about the surrendering of "the land" to the descendant of Amaterasu? Which, after all, is "the land" in question?

I suppose that Ōnamuchi, as well as the goddess of the sun (under different names, like Amateru-hime, and Hiru-me) and the god believed to secure the sufficient quantity of rain (whose later name became connected with the Korean rituals for rain and acquired his name from the word for "priest" responsible for these rites, *susung* Æ Susanoo) were worshiped widely in ancient Japan. Yet, with the rise of the Yamato court, the goddess of the sun came to be considered the ancestress of the ruling family, and eventually became the Great Goddess Amaterasu (Amaterasu Ō-mi-kami). The god Susanoo, equally important for the growing of the crops, could not but also acquire a high role, yet he could not, by all means, be equal to the goddess of the ruling family. And having his bad features stressed, he became her opposite. On the other hand, the rank of "the Great god who built the world under the Heaven," Ōkuninushi = Ōnamuchi, had to fall in position, and this was

expressed symbolically by his surrendering of "the land" to the descendant of Amaterasu.

Thus Susanoo, a god deeply related with rice farming in ancient Japan, in connection with the different influences from the continent and the redistribution of the roles with the construction of the royal myth, was revealed as a god with quite a complex, contradictory character.

Let us here reconsider the relation between the above-mentioned three gods. As it was already mentioned, Ōnamuchi was not considered Susanoo's descendant in the *Fudoki*. Thus it can be concluded that before the construction of the royal myth, "the Great god who built the world under Heaven" was in a position higher than Susanoo. Yet after the establishment of the imperial court in Yamato and the reorganization of the pantheon, ōnamuchi was made Susanoo's grand-son. This was done because it seemed quite suitable that the god (the one worshiped by the former rulers) who surrendered "the land" to the descendants of Amaterasu (the new ruler) be considered the descendant of her counterpart, Susanoo.[63] On the other hand, from the disasters that rain sometimes brings, as well as those which occur when rain is too scarce, Susanoo was suitable to be interpreted as the god threatening the order of Takama-ga-Hara. And this came to serve well the idea that the descendant of such a god who knows no proper order, *Ōkuninushi*, was not the right ruler of the country. In other words, *Ōkuninushi* had to yield the rulership to the descendant of the goddess Amaterasu — ruler of the world with proper order, Takama-ga-Hara. Besides, being in disorder from the standards of Takama-ga-Hara, this kuni had to be first pacified, put in order (the word used for this is *kotomukeru*) rather than to be conquered. It was thus natural that the only ruler who could maintain the proper order in the kingdom was the descendant of Amaterasu, the one chosen and sent by her and the other Heavenly gods. With this the proof that the king was the only right ruler of the country was expressed.

We can thus conclude that the creators of the records did not make up new gods, nor create connections between them without any deep reasons, but reorganized the ancient gods and their relations so that they would suit the idea of the legitimate rulership of the royal family. Such a meaning is implied in the Preface of the *Kojiki*, where it is written that the emperor had ordered the compilation of this record so that "falsehoods" could be "erased and the truth determined, in order to transmit [the truth] to after ages."[64] Thus, in the records of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, the gods worshiped in old Japan were related with the established state order.

Notes

1. I should note here that ancient Japanese beliefs and Japanese mythology are not seen by Japanese scholars as quite one and the same thing. By "Japanese mythology," Japanese scholars mean the myths written down in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, in which the old beliefs are carefully reorganized to support the political organization of eighth-century Japanese society. Yet, I think that in spite of this, these books give quite a good picture of the pantheon of gods even in ancient, pre-eighth-century, Japan.
2. Motoori Norinaga (1798).
3. Ōbayashi Taryō (1973).
4. Matsumura Takeo (1954-1958).
5. Matsumoto Nobuhiro (1971).
6. *Kuni* is a word with several different meanings — "land," "country," "state," even "world." Since the establishment of the Japanese kingdom with the Central Government in Yamato, kuni was used in the sense of "province."
7. Matsumae Takeshi (1970).
8. Mizubayashi Takeshi (1991).
9. Mishina Shōei (1970).
10. 金大問, In Japanese his name is pronounced Kin Daimon.
11. Chamberlain (1981: 44).
12. Ibid.: 50.
13. In Japanese *una bara* (海原) In the mythological narrative of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, the sea is mentioned as one of the three "plains". the Plain in High Heaven (*Takama-ga-hara*), the Reed-Plain (*Ashihara*) and the Sea-Plain (*Una bara*)
14. Chamberlain (1981. 51)
15. My translation.
16. The Japanese word used is *nareru*.
17. *Ukehi* was seemingly a kind of divination for proving one's statement right or wrong. It is usually translated as "oat," and I use this word here, yet this is not a very exact translation. See Mizubayashi (1991).
18. In this case "O" =小= small.
19. Chamberlain (1981· 255).
20. *Kokoro* = heart—"villainous and ferocious heart"
21. "The five grains" (*go koku*) in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, are actually four kinds of cereals (rice, soy beans, *azuki* beans, barley, or wheat) and silkworms
22. Saigo Nobutsuna (1967).
23. The Chinese word 天下 (Japanese pronunciation tenka), literally meaning "The World under Heaven," is used. This usually indicates the state in the documents of ancient Japan, yet here it seems to me that the word is used in a more literal sense to mean the world as a whole, including the Heavenly World of the Gods as well, as seen from the appointment of Amaterasu as its ruler.
24. *tenka*.
25. See Mizubayashi (1991).
26. *Nu-name*, also pconounced shin-jō-sai, was the ritual offering of the first rice of the year. During that offering, the person who performed the ritual locked oneself in the

house and did not let anybody in till the ritual was finished. It was carried out at every house, probably by the women, as seen from poems in the Man'yoshū, and became the base for the *dai-jō-sai*, the "big offering," a part of the coronation ceremony.

27. Motoori (1798 vol 9, 422).
28. But at the same time, Norinaga is right, as the ritual *ō-harae* (big *harae*) is performed at certain times of the year all over Japan, where people transfer their sins to paper dolls (the characters are for "doll," 人形, yet they are read *hito-gata*) which are burned or sent along a river. This is actually the basic meaning of the festival of the dolls, *Hina-matsuri*, which has been transformed into the beautiful festival for girls in modern times.
29 *Sake* — the Japanese traditional alcoholic drink, made of fermented rice. In ancient times it was used exclusively for ritual offerings and was prepared by women, who chewed the rice in order to cause its fermentation.
30. *See* Matsumae (1970: 128-129).
31. From *hae* = fly, insect, i.e. "the insects of the *sa-tsuki* (*see* note 32).
32. *Satsuki* was the month when the planting of the rice fields was done. It is written with the characters of fifth month (五月, *gogatsu*).
33. *nae* = seedlings, *sa-nae* = young rice seedlings.
34. *otome* = young girl, maiden; *sa-otome* were the women who planted the rice seedlings.
35 *biraki* Æ from *hiraku* = open. The "opening" of the rice field, i.e. the beginning of its planting.
36. *noboru* = climb. Thus was called the end of the rice field planting season. For more examples, see Motoori, (1798: vol. 7, 330).
37. Ogawa "Kome to sakura," vol 23, 51-53.
38. Motoori (1798 vol. 7, 328).
39 A hole dug in the ground and provided with a roof, used mainly as storage.
40 The "Great Land" is called here by Susanoo *utsushi-kuni*, which meant the world of the humans.
41. In both this and the above cases, the word used is *nushi* means "lord," "master," "ruler," "governor."
42. "flies in the fifth moon" (*sa-bae*), *see* notes 31 and 32.
43. Chamberlain (1981 51). *See* note 11.
44 Motoori supposes that here "myriad" is a copyist's error of "evil " This sentence is a repetition of the one in Sect XII stated above See Chamberlain (1981: 664) See note 11.
45. Chamberlain (1981 53) See note 11.
46. Chamberlain (1981: 61). See note 11. "The Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity" = Amaterasu.
47. Anonymous (1973).
48. Singer (1973).
49. *me, ma* = rice
50. Chamberlain, (1981: 70). See note 11.
51. Nishimiya (1993).
52 Both combinations of characters are pronounced in the same way.
53. *Senshū-wamyō-ruijū-sho*, p. 244.

54. Matsumae, (1970: 126-137).
55. Idem.
56 *Shoku nihongi*, the records of the Enryaku period, 1st year 6th month.
57. 丹生川上神社, See Matsumae (1970)
58. In later times the word was used in the sense of "saint".
59. Matsumae Takeshi shows quite clearly that actually the prototype of the goddess Amaterasu was a male deity Amateru who was worshiped by the fishing people of ancient Japan. See Matsumae (1998).
60 *Nihon shoki*, (557 n 198).
61. Ogawa (1980 198).
62. Matsumae (1970 140-141).
63 Senda Minoru explains it as a transition from a "dynasty of bronze items" (青銅器の王朝) to a "dynasty of mirrors" (鏡の王朝) The first one he sees as worshiping what he calls the Izumo or Ōkuninushi line, while the second was first connected with Ame-no Hiboko, whom he considers a symbolical naming of the groups migrating to the archipelago from the Korean peninsula and causing that transition His conclusions are based on a thorough comprehensive analysis of ancient Japanese documents, including the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and the *Fudoki*, and are backed with abundant archeological examples. Senda Minoru (1988).
64. Chamberlain (1981. 4).

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要 旨

古代日本神話におけるスサノヲ

エミリア・ガデレワ

『古事記』と『日本書紀』にみえるスサノヲの描き方に矛盾がある。一方、彼は高天の原で天つ罪を犯し、姉アマテラスをこまらせるが、他方出雲国でヤマタノオロチを退治し、イナダヒメを助ける。それに対して『風土記』では、スサノヲの性格に悪い面が一つも見えない。この神の解釈が多くあるが、ここでは上述の三書や他古代史料の総合的なアプローチによる、私の仮定を述べてみた。スサノヲの矛盾的な役のもとには、政治的な意図があったことをいうだけで、説明できない。この神の性格には、本来から悪良両面があったと思われる。彼は、豊穣に必要な雨水をもたらし、課題を果たしたことにより性格が良いか悪いかということが決められた。また、彼が崇拝された神社では、神々の食料と考えられたクマという聖なるお米や水がささげられたと考えられる。さらに、スサノヲとアマテラスとの関係についていえば、日の神－水の神のペア崇拝をもとにして、柳田国男がいうヒコーヒメ関係がその描き方を決定されたのではないだろうかと思われる。